

A dime worth \$125: U.S. Mint goofs again

By Roger Boye

Four lucky persons have reported finding 1982-dated dimes in circulation that could be worth as much as \$125 each, thanks to a sloppy goof made by government engravers.

United States dimes produced since 1980 are supposed to sport tiny mint marks just above the date, either a "P" for Philadelphia, "D" for Denver or "S" for San Francisco. No letter appears on the error pieces.

"From all indications, the coin is going to be scarce, if not rare," reports the hobby newspaper Numismatic News. Market analyst Bob Wilhite suggests that each dime might sell for from \$50 to as much as \$125 for "choice uncirculated" specimens.

Mint workers created the error by forgetting to punch a mint mark into just one of the hundreds of dies used to make 1982 dimes. Machines could have struck as many as 1 million coins from the "bad die" before it wore out.

But author Alan Herbert, who examined two of the four oddities, believes that the actual mintage was much less. According to him, the die that made the no-mint-mark dimes cracked after creating a limited number of pieces, probably forcing workers to remove it from service prematurely. [Coins produced from a cracking die often show faint lines that look like scratches to the untrained eye.]

All error coins reported so far were found by persons living in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Conceivably, Chicago-area collectors could discover other specimens of the potential rarity.

Footnote: A 77-year-old Cleveland man and his friend uncovered two of the four coins while searching through rolls of dimes, Herbert said after talking to the man. Sadly, the elderly man's friend inadvertently spent one of the keepsakes in a vending machine.

"He had put the coin in his pocket with other change," Herbert said last week. "I guess he wasn't a collector."

● As part of the U.S. Mint's ongoing presidential medal series, bureaucrats have unveiled an official government medal depicting President Reagan.

The medal—which was designed by Elizabeth Jones, chief sculptor-engraver of the U.S.—features an impressionistic portrait of Reagan developed from photographs. The image of a mountain in Yosemite National Park adorns the tails side.

To order a bronze medal depicting Reagan or any of our other presidents, write to the Bureau of the Mint, 55 Mint St., San Francisco, Calif. 94175. A 3-inch-diameter specimen costs \$10.75; a miniature-sized medal is \$1.